Amos Vogel October 1971

Film As A Subversive Art

From its inception, cinema has always been a major and appropriate target of censors, traditionalists, and the state. As a result, public cinema has often found it difficult to display openly some of man's most fundamental human experiences. Perhaps this was due to the censor's fear of the powerful impact of film on people--especially when it was manipulated by aesthetic and ideological innovators and rebels. But today, neither fear nor repression seems able to stem an accelerating worldwide trend toward a more liberated cinema, in which all previously forbidden subjects are boldly explored.

Through features, shorts and excerpts this series traces the evolution of cinema's early taboos into its new freedom, contrasting spurious (commercial) liberation with the genuine (artistic), and examining different topics, tendencies, and styles from a sociological, psychological and aesthetic point of view.

THE ATTACK ON PURITANISM--BIRTH: The mysterious, beautiful beginning of life as seen by doctors, poets and the new, radical pantheists.

THE ATTACK ON PURITANISM--NUDITY: The figleaves crumble, but not the Republic; early first steps--and full revelation; suppression superseded by casual acceptance; can nudity become boring?

THE END OF SEXUAL TABOOS--EROTIC AND PORNOGRAPHIC CINEMA: The American avant-garde provides ideology and examples; the effect on commercial cinema; Warhol at Cinema II; mechanical and sensuous eroticism.

THE END OF SEXUAL TABOOS--HOMOSEXUALITY AND OTHER VARIANTS: From symbolic representation to total visual disclosure; the acceptance of sexual diversity; visual shock denoting hidden prejudices.

BLASPHEMY AND ANTI-CLERICALISM: Nothing is sacred to the de-secrators; pained by the human condition, the international avant-garde questions God's existence and attacks his presumed earthly representatives.

THE ATTACK ON BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY--THE NEW LEFT: The sham of equality and justice and the reality of a class society, as seen by angry young filmmakers.

THE ATTACK ON RATIONALISM--ABSURD AND SURREALIST CINEMA: The subversion of the familiar; the dislocation of conventional reality; the limits of rationalism: anarchic satires and anti-bourgeois shocks as secret weapons of the revolution.

DEATH--MAN, BEAST AND GENOCIDE: The reality of death on film; animal slaughter as metaphor; Buchenwald, Hiroshima and Vietnam; death as the ultimate secret.

"REVOLUTIONARY" CINEMA--THE NEW GODARD AND MAOISM: Godard breaks with his past; the attempt at a radical cinema that is not an art, but an act in the service of the revolution; the ultimate intractability of art.

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